

Administrator and Teacher Qualifications and Training Needs

March 2000 (Preliminary)

Alternative Schools and Programs



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
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Acknowledgments

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Issues and Recommendations

A Synthesis Across Three Reports

These recommendations are drawn from three alternative learning program (ALP) evaluation reports submitted to the State Board of Education in March 2000, as well as from legislative action related to ALPs in the 1999 Legislative Session and other (SBE) policy decisions in the 1998-99 school year. Some of these legislative and policy changes relate to recommendations in ALP evaluation reports from previous years. The three evaluation reports submitted to the State Board of Education are (1) Alternative Learning Programs Evaluation, 1998-99, (2) Case Studies of Best Practices in Alternative Learning Programs, 1998 and 1999, and (3) Qualifications of Teachers and Administrators in Alternative Learning Programs, 2000. The first two reports address the evaluation that was conducted during the 1998-99 school year. The third report is part of the 1999-2000 evaluation but is being presented prior to the 2000 ALP evaluation report in order to send it to the General Assembly before the 2000 legislative session begins.

Because change is an incremental process and the development of ALPs to meet diverse student needs is still in an early stage in many LEAs, most recommendations from previous evaluations continue to be relevant. In addition, the State Board of Education and the General Assembly passed several policies in 1998-99 that address some of the previous recommendations as well as the issues identified in the current evaluation. The issues and recommendations discussed here will update the status of previous recommendations and address any new areas identified.

Alternative Learning Programs Defined

The evaluation of ALPs uses a specific definition to identify ALPs for inclusion in the annual statewide evaluation. Each year LEAs identify programs they refer to as “alternative” that do not meet this specific definition. Although districts are required to track special state funds spent on ALPs, these programs can still differ from the state definition used for the evaluation. These may be needed programs, but they do not reflect the same kind of interventions typically found in programs that deliver core instruction to at-risk youth separately from the regular school program.

In the 1999 legislative session, GS155C-47 (32a) required that the state develop a definition for ALPs. The State Board of Education approved a definition for alternative learning programs, along with a definition that distinguishes “programs” from official “schools” and a revised definition of “at-risk students” (SBE Policy Manual, January 1999). The adopted definition is similar to the one used in the ALP evaluation for the last four years.

Recommendation One: *The common definition of alternative learning programs should ensure better consistency of program type and help guide local education agencies (LEAs) in developing a continuum of services for at-risk students. LEAs should carefully consider this definition as they develop and refine their ALPs.*

State Board of Education ALP Definition. Alternative Learning Programs are defined as services for students at risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, and/or dropping out of school, and they better meet the needs of individual students. They serve students at any level who are suspended and/or expelled, have dropped out and desire to return to school, have a history of truancy, are returning from juvenile justice settings, and whose learning styles are better served in an alternative setting. They provide individualized programs outside of a standard classroom setting in a caring atmosphere in which students learn the skills necessary to redirect their lives. An alternative learning program must provide the primary instruction for selected at-risk students, enroll students for a designated period of time, usually a minimum of one academic grading period, and offer course credit or grade-level promotion credit in core academic areas. Alternative learning programs may also address behavioral or emotional problems that interfere with adjustment to, or benefiting from, the regular education beyond regular school hours, provide flexible scheduling, and/or assist students in meeting graduation requirements other than course credits. Alternative learning programs for at-risk students typically serve students in an alternative school or alternative program within the regular school.

Availability of Alternative Learning Programs

Effective with the 2000-2001 school year, every LEA must establish at least one ALP, unless they can document the lack of need and receive a waiver from the State Board of Education. The 1998-99 evaluation found that 11 LEAs (Appendix D) reported not having an ALP consistent with the definition used in the evaluation. The definition of ALPs now in SBE policy should help to ensure that appropriate services are available for the most at-risk students and that funds are spent on somewhat similar types of programs.

Recommendation Two: *The definition provided in SBE policy should be the basis for judging whether this mandate is met and for tracking At-Risk Student/Alternative School and Programs funds that are directed to ALPs. However, the current types of ALPs do not address the multiplicity of student needs. Further, the current number of ALPs is inadequate for the number of students who need them. Given the lack of adequate funding cited by many ALPs and the costs of providing services to at-risk students, providing additional services and programs will require persistence, reprioritizing, creativity, and a continuing commitment from state and local educators and policymakers.*

Coordination between Regular Schools and ALPs

Previous evaluation reports have consistently noted the lack of coordination and communication between the home or referring school and the ALPs. At present, home

schools assume no accountability and limited if any responsibility for students once they leave the home school. Further, they provide little if any transition support when students return to their home school. Therefore, students who enroll in ALPs and apply themselves to improve behavior and catch up academically, often return to the same conditions in their home schools that caused them to fail in the first place. It is no surprise that many students either do not want to return to their home schools, if they do, continue to have problems, and either fail again, returning to the ALPs, or drop out of school entirely. The case studies conducted in 1998 and 1999 reinforce this concern.

Although alternative educators typically express concern about the lack of communication, support and coordination with the regular/feeder schools, some regular school educators have expressed concern about lack of communication from the ALP. Complaints from regular educators, however, are infrequent and generally concern the lack of feedback when a student who is referred to an ALP is not accepted. Some regular educators express the desire to know why the student was not accepted by the ALP.

Similarly, ALP staff and students feel that many regular school educators perceive them negatively and often resent money spent on these students. Many ALP programs cited comments made by non-ALP educators that indicated “good money was being thrown at bad students” or that “students want to go there because it’s fun.”

Clearly, this issue will be a long-term one and will require continued attention and monitoring by the LEA. The 1999 legislation addresses procedures to be used by schools referring students to ALPs, effective January 1, 2000. These procedures require documentation of how the student is identified as being at-risk of academic failure or as being disruptive or disorderly. The reasons for the referral and all relevant student records must also be provided to the ALP.

Recommendation Three: *LEAs need to work with their referring schools and ALPs to develop structures and procedures that will lead to better communication and collaboration among all schools in meeting the needs of at-risk students. Though not a requirement specified in the legislation, evaluation results continue to point to the needs for (a) communication with referring parties when students are not admitted to ALPs about the reasons why they were not admitted and development of appropriate interventions for those students within the regular school, (b) transition plans, after-care, and follow-up when students are returned to the home school, and (c) constructive ways to address prevalent negative perceptions and images of the ALP by other educators and the community. Further, (d) standards and academic expectations for ALP students should be clearly communicated to all educators in an effort to ensure that academic rigor, with appropriate supports, are built into the program.*

Multiple Models of ALPs and a Continuum of Services

The 1998-99 ALP Evaluation as well as previous evaluations found that students with multiple needs are frequently placed in one program. While small, flexible programs might be able to adjust their instruction and interventions according to diverse needs, it is increasingly difficult for programs to accommodate the growing range in the degree, variety, and severity of student needs in one setting. At the same time, a variety of types of interventions often are not available in a given LEA. Thus, an ALP may become the target placement for a greater variety and severity of needs than originally intended because it is the only option that exists. Indeed, several of the ALP best practice case study sites revealed a change over time in the nature of the student population from that for whom the ALP was originally designed. Because the ALP student population is characterized by so many factors that put them at risk, there is great need for comprehensive support services to address the personal and social problems that impede student success in school and in the community. Few ALPs have the needed student support staff.

These diverse needs call for multiple types of services and programs, comprehensive support services, and more than one type of ALP. Given that LEAs already have limited funds for ALPs and related services, providing additional programs and services presents a daunting task. The need for a continuum of services for at-risk students was identified in the May 1999 evaluation report entitled, *Alternative Education for Suspended and Expelled Students* (May 1999). This group of students has become an increasing concern for educators and policymakers as they attempt both to provide an education for suspended and expelled students and to keep the schools and community safe. The report recognized that, while ALPs might be one appropriate placement for such students, many ALPs were not designed for suspended and expelled students and many of these students would not be appropriately placed in any ALP.

Recommendation Four: Expanded services are needed for mild to severe discipline and behavior problems of various types both within and outside of the school setting. Multiple ALPs and/or programs within the ALP may be needed.

Continuum of Services Development at the State and Local Levels. At the direction of the State Superintendent, a DPI working group developed a draft continuum of services, as a beginning framework of potential services for a variety of student needs. The School Improvement Division convened a task force comprised of multiple state agencies (including offices from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Office of Juvenile Justice, and the Center for the Prevention of School Violence), LEA staff, and community representatives to address these issues. This task force is now being co-facilitated with the Office of Juvenile Justice and is focusing on the needs of the more serious problems of students that schools and the community are increasingly facing (e.g., expelled students, substance abuse, abused and neglected students, and students returning from state institutions). Thus, the state will develop a broad-based continuum of existing and needed state services.

Recommendation Five: *LEAs should work with their local community agencies and civic groups to develop a continuum of existing services, as well as to identify needed services not currently available, for a wide range of types and severity of at-risk needs. One good model is the continuum completed by the Asheville City Schools in collaboration with multiple community groups and agencies. The state continuum will also provide guidance as LEAs consider needed options.*

Services for Students with Severe Needs. As noted above, schools are increasingly facing the challenge of providing an appropriate education for students who have substantial emotional and behavioral, as well as academic, needs. Long-term suspended and expelled students are among those challenges. A subcommittee of the Juvenile Justice Council, chaired by Judge Kenneth Titus, has been charged with determining needs for suspended and expelled students. Since the DPI/OJJ collaborative task force includes the relevant personnel and is also addressing this issue, Judge Titus is attending these meetings and will incorporate resulting recommendations when his subcommittee reports back to the Juvenile Justice Council. These recommendations should address state-level needs for programs and funding, as well as provide guidance to LEAs, training schools, and detention centers in developing appropriate programs and services.

Finally, LEAs should be working with Local Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils (JCPCs), which are mandated in each county and include diverse community organizations, in developing programs for early intervention and to serve seriously disruptive and adjudicated youth. It is important that each agency involved understand the roles and responsibilities, services and limitations, of all other youth-serving agencies. There should be *clear points in the process* where the delivery of services to a given youth “*passes*” from one agency to another, in terms of *primary responsibility*. Roles, responsibilities, and appropriate supports should also be clearly understood in *transitions* of youth from one setting to another. Further, the continuum should be designed as a “*two-way street*”, clearly designating procedures, processes, roles, responsibilities, and necessary supports, when a youth manages to re-enter the mainstream.

Recommendation Six: *Complete the state-level continuum and recommendations for services and programs for at-risk youth, especially for suspended and expelled youth. LEAs should examine services locally, including working with the Local Juvenile Crime Prevention Councils to identify existing services and develop programs where gaps exist. Such services would be part of a larger continuum of services.*

Comprehensive Services

The need for instructional support services (i.e., counseling, social work, and psychological services) for alternative learning program students has been noted in previous

evaluation reports. The survey of ALP administrators in the current evaluation illustrated just how limited these services are for students. Out of 90 responding administrators, there are a total of 29 full-time and 17 part-time counselors and 16 full-time and 16 part-time social workers. School psychologists are virtually non-existent, with only two full-time and 15 part-time personnel serving 90 ALPs. Further, there was only one full-time nurse. Given the multiple needs of ALP students, especially behavioral and emotional problems, this lack of support services is striking.

Recommendation Seven: *Districts need to examine use of funds for instructional support services to ensure that services are available to ALPs. Full-time counselors likely need to be placed in every ALP. Adequate access to social work and psychological services is also critical in order to address, behavioral, emotional, and social needs of students. Physical needs may dictate better access to health services, either through full-time nurses in the district or with cooperative agreements with Health Departments.*

Staff Qualifications and Training Needs

Licensure of staff in the ALPs. Based on the preliminary results from the teacher and principal surveys in the Qualification of ALP Personnel Evaluation, teachers in ALPs hold credentials similar to all teachers statewide and most are licensed in the areas they teach. Still, a significant number of teachers – mostly in the core academic areas - are teaching in areas where they do not hold appropriate credentials. If the essential gains in academic areas for ALP students are to be made, appropriately trained grade level and subject matter teachers must be available. Also, slightly fewer teachers in middle schools hold appropriate credentials. These are grade levels that seem to hold special challenges for ALP and other educators.

While we want the best and brightest teachers in every classroom, it is especially important for ALPs. As one local school board member stated, “Kids who are performing well usually have the things these kids don’t.” Many, though certainly not all, have the capacity to learn in regular classrooms in less than ideal conditions and have parents who provide educational support and experiences outside of school that most ALP students do not receive. Students in ALPs often, in addition to lacking motivation to learn, have very different learning styles and do not have the same types of educational support from their families and communities. As one young ALP student told researchers, “I never gave up on school. My teachers gave up on me.”

Recommendation Eight: *Attracting fully licensed teachers in general is a challenge that most LEAs face. Attracting licensed teachers to ALPs is even more formidable. The LEAs and the state must continue to find ways to attract teachers to this challenging population, especially in the core academic areas, and to get those already teaching in ALPs fully credentialed.*

ALPs need teachers with strong content knowledge, who are creative and persistent to the extent necessary to find the ways needed to teach each and every child whatever is needed. ALPs, including high school programs, need teachers who are strong in teaching the basic skills including reading, mathematics (even basic math facts of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), and writing. Further, in touring training schools and detention centers and in discussions with staff in the Office of Juvenile Justice, the number one concern is that students, young and old, do not know how to read.

Recommendation Nine: *Appropriate reading assessments and reading specialists should be a priority for ALPs, regardless of the age of the youth served. It is essential that every child be given the opportunity to learn to read by being taught at the appropriate level of instruction and with a variety of appropriate instructional strategies. Reading skills will enhance the child's ability to learn other basic skills in mathematics and writing.*

Performance Appraisal Ratings of ALP Teachers. As noted previously, 1999 legislation encouraged LEAs to assign only teachers with at least an “above standard” performance appraisal ratings to ALPs. In the preliminary data from 90 principal/director surveys (45% return), three-fourths of the ALP teachers earned a rating of “above standard” or higher. Only about 4 percent were rated below standard or unsatisfactory. Most principals (90%) used the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI) in their evaluations, although 45 percent of the principals felt that this instrument was not appropriate for ALP teachers. This response raises the question as to whether LEAs are requiring use of the TPAI for ALP teachers.

Recommendation Ten: *LEAs, assisted by appropriate state and university personnel, should study the issue of the kinds of instruments and procedures that are appropriate for conducting performance appraisals for ALP staff. Clearly, there are skills required that go beyond those identified on the TPAI.*

Professional Development for Teachers in ALPs. However, even when teachers do hold a license in the grade levels and subjects they teach in the ALP, finding staff who are truly prepared to work with this student population continues to be a challenge for LEAs. The extensive needs for training are reflected in the percentage of teachers indicating they need training in so many areas. The survey is corroborated by the case study comments of many teachers indicating that no teacher preparation program came close to preparing them for these kinds of students.

Out of 25 topics listed, even the least frequently needed training area was needed by almost one-third of the teachers (i.e., teaching through group discussion). However, it is notable that the areas where training was most highly needed are in working with the more severe problems of students (e.g., substance abuse, abused and neglected students, and students returning from training institutions), as well as strategies to help students scoring

below Level III on state tests. This may reflect the changing nature of the students being referred to ALPs.

Principals and directors of ALPs were asked about the number one factor they consider in hiring staff for ALPs. Over one-half indicated the ability to teach diverse learners (and most teachers had received training in this area) and one-fifth noted the ability to manage student behavior, followed closely by being a caring person. Interestingly, content knowledge was indicated by only three percent.

Recommendation Eleven: *ALP teachers and administrators need high quality and different kinds of training in order to be effective with students enrolling in these settings. Both the state and LEAs must develop extensive training opportunities for staff in ALPs based on the student populations they serve and identified needs of staff. Given the nature of the needs expressed on staff surveys, LEAs and ALPs should work to identify and tap sources of expertise within other youth-serving agencies that work similar populations of youth including aggressive and violent, adjudicated, substance abusing youth and those with moderate to severe social and emotional problems, such as abused and neglected youth or those in state or local mental health facilities.*

Given the need to help students improve in core academic areas and on the state assessments, LEAs should ensure that ALP staff receive the opportunity to attend any training offered other educators on working with Level I and II students, preparing students for grade-level promotion standards, and the like. Still, ALP teachers may need training that is different in some respects because of the other problems these youth are experiencing. Very few students currently enrolled in ALPs are there because of academic difficulties alone. They most often have a host of problems that together negatively impact their ability to learn.

Professional Development for ALP Administrators. The vast majority of ALP administrators reported they consider themselves appropriately prepared in academic, behavioral, and leadership areas. The area in which the lowest percentage reported considering themselves adequately prepared was “accountability / evaluation / program improvement”. Still, 80 percent consider themselves to be well trained in this area. Even with these ratings, a large percentage expressed needs for training, especially in systems to provide consistency, high expectations, and instructional strategies for diverse learning styles. At least 40 percent of principals identified training needs in creative fiscal management, working with suspended and expelled youth, recruiting effective staff, working with community agencies, and involving parents.

Recommendation Twelve: *Like teachers, ALP administrators need professional development specifically designed to meet their needs. LEAs might work creatively with other agencies in ways described for teachers to produce some of the needed training for ALP administrators. The new state association of alternative*

educators is also beginning to provide meaningful staff development for ALP administrators and teachers.

Recommendation Thirteen: *Universities need to be part of the training provided, as well as assessing how well they are preparing teachers to deal with the extensive needs of students, even those who do not end up in ALPs. Spending time in ALPs, talking to teachers, administrators, and students there would provide valuable information and insight into the kinds of training needed, both pre-service and in-service. University programs need to begin to address the changing needs of the student population in schools to better prepare all teachers, so that keys to success can be found for teaching a greater number of these students, without shipping them off to ALPs.*

Attracting and Maintaining Quality Staff to ALPs

In open-ended survey questions, both principals and teachers were asked what strategies were needed to recruit and retain quality staff in ALPs. Most of the teacher respondents (43%) indicated financial concerns: salaries, bonuses, and incentives. The next highest rated suggestion was training and stress relief (10%). Slightly over-one third of the principals noted a combination of salaries and flexibility are needed to attract and retain quality staff.

Recommendation Fourteen: *Teacher quality is the key to educating at-risk youth. Repeatedly over the years of the statewide evaluation of ALPs, legislators as well as ALP staff have suggested increasing salaries and offering bonuses or “combat pay” as a strategy for addressing the teacher quality issue. Because the needs of ALP students are so great, ALP staff, both administrators and teachers alike, are at great risk of burn out. ALP teachers have made other suggestions for addressing the teacher quality issue. They have suggested some schedule of rotation out of ALPs into other interesting assignments while they rejuvenate themselves before returning. Several times the suggestion has been made by ALP staff that other high-quality, regular classroom teachers serve even short periods of time, even a grading period during the year, as a way of increasing the respect for and understanding of these programs and the strengths and needs of the students they serve.*

Funding for ALPs

ALP staff frequently cited the need for better funding, either explicitly or implicitly (e.g., noting the need for better facilities). Expectations and demands on education are greater than ever to serve student populations that are increasingly diverse and which include students who come to us with multiple problems beyond academic ones. With these

expectations, the funding demands are increasing. Local, federal and grant funds are among those that may be sought. Creative funding and maximizing effective use of existing funds is essential. Coordinating and eliminating overlap in programs and services is essential. It is imperative that schools develop strong relationships with all family and youth serving agencies and organizations to shape a cohesive support system, pooling money, personnel, transportation systems, and other resources to solve common concerns. Currently only slightly over half (57%) of ALP administrators indicated that they are knowledgeable about the full range of programs and services funded from their LEA At-Risk Students/Alternative Schools and Programs funds. Still fewer, only about a third have input into decisions about setting priorities for how local at-risk dollars are spent.

Recommendation Fifteen: *ALP administrators should be an essential part of any LEA team looking at overall expenditures for at-risk students. They have valuable and unique experience and expertise to offer in programming for at-risk students. LEAs should include ALP administrators in developing a plan for the full-range of services and programs as well as decisions about priorities for local at-risk expenditures. Over the four years of the evaluation, ALP administrators have consistently expressed concerns over funding issues, saying they feel “like a red-headed stepchildren”. As a result of these concerns, and their unsuccessful attempts to influence local funding decisions, they have recommended that a funding stream be created which is exclusively dedicated to ALPs.*

The General Assembly has increased its appropriations to the At-Risk Students and Alternative Schools Fund every year since the consolidated fund was created. However, the current level of funding is not adequate to support and expand ALPs in ways that are needed in order to serve the growing population of students at-risk of academic failure and juvenile crime. There is growing support for providing educational opportunities for suspended and expelled students. Additionally, there are student accountability standards that will require more than ever from students as they progress through the levels of schooling.

Recommendation Sixteen: *There is recognition of the need to offer a full continuum of services to meet the needs of at-risk students, from academic to behavioral to social/emotional. Once this continuum of services is defined and related costs are determined, a schedule for funding, including priority starting points, should be developed.*

Accountability for Alternative Schools and Programs

Previous reports have addressed the issues of poor tracking and evaluation of student progress for students enrolled in ALPs. Achievement of students in alternative programs in grades 3-8 has been remarkably stagnant based on the statewide End-of-Grade (EOG) Test analyses for these students. End-of-Course (EOC) Test results (i.e., achievement at Level III or IV) for three high school courses have improved each year of the evaluation, but are still

well below the state average. Documentation for other types of outcomes is minimal, other than through impressions and self-reports from ALPs. These students deserve the same kind of accountability from educators as other students. Having asserted this strong need, the evaluators also recognize that these students are among the most challenging students to educate and to keep in school and that accountability must also include other types of measures.

It is interesting to note the increase in the percent of students being enrolled in high school alternative schools for academic reasons that is reflected in the evaluation report for 1998-99. This increase may be a sign of more attention to academic needs of students or it may indicate an increase in the practice of removing poor-achieving high school students from the regular high school accountability model.

Accountability for Alternative Schools. The State Board of Education adopted revisions to the ABCs Accountability Model during the 1998-99 school year that specifically address accountability for alternative schools (SBE Policy Manual, June 1999). Alternative schools have a designated school code and a state-assigned principal. There were 67 such alternative schools in 1998-99. The new accountability policy being implemented in the 1999-2000 school year addresses most of the previous recommendations. The policy requires that alternative schools participate in the ABCs accountability program in a manner specifically designed to accommodate the diversity among the schools and the student populations served. The alternative school accountability system is based on six components; three of which are mandated and three are locally developed. The three mandated components are achievement-based, using state test scores specifically designated by the SBE. The three locally developed components are based on the specific purposes and mission of the alternative school and must be approved by the LEA superintendent and the local board of education. Achieving three or four of these components is equivalent to meeting “expected growth” in the regular ABCs Accountability Model.

Alternative educators have expressed appreciation to the Compliance Commission and the Reporting Section of the DPI Division of Accountability Services for their determined efforts to develop a suitable ABCs Accountability Policy for alternative schools. Alternative educators have voiced the desire to be included in the ABCs Accountability process, providing the accountability requirements for alternative schools include some provision to allow measures based on the specific mission of each school. The policy now in place does just that. Further, alternative educators expressed a desire to be eligible for incentive awards for progress made, as are regular educators in the standard ABCs Accountability Model, which the current policy also affords.

Since this is the first year of implementation for the ABCs Accountability Policy for alternative schools, several aspects of the accountability policy for alternative schools bear monitoring. They include the following:

- (a) It is possible for an alternative school to meet expected growth without ever

addressing any of the three state assessment-based components. Thus, academic progress of students might continue to remain below acceptable levels.

(b) On the other hand, sufficient data/days in membership rules do apply to the three mandated achievement-based components for alternative schools. That means, for example, if an alternative school does not have the sufficient number of test scores for the ABCs Accountability Model, they may be limited in their ability to demonstrate enough progress to warrant exemplary incentive awards since three of the six accountability components are based on state test scores. By nature of the populations they serve, there are problems getting both previous year's and current year's test scores for many ALP students. There are often problems that impact the ABCs results such as a high rate of absenteeism, mobility of student population, and incorrect or incomplete data on answer sheets so that matched data are not available. For alternative schools serving grades 3-8 the impact on insufficient test data/days in membership is especially significant since the End-of-Grade score that is earned by the alternative school counts three times (for all three state test components) in their ABCs Accountability Model. If a school did not have sufficient EOG data meeting these criteria, the most they could earn in their accountability policy is three of the six components, which limits them to the "meets expectation" category. That would be the highest level of financial incentives possible in such a scenario.

(c) Membership rules for End-of-Grade tests require that the student be in membership in the school for 91 days in order for the student's score to count in the growth component of the school's accountability results. The requirement is 160 days for the NC High School Comprehensive Test (HSCT). In either case, whether in a regular school or alternative school, if the membership rule is not met, a student's EOG or HSCT scores will only be reflected in the performance composite, not the growth aspect, of the school's accountability results. Again, since the growth component of accountability program determines eligibility for incentive awards, alternative schools could be at a disadvantage. In the case of high school End-of-Course tests, the student's scores count wherever the student is tested (unless the student is dual enrolled). If a low-performing student is sent from a regular high school to an alternative school during the last few weeks of school, the student's score will be reflected in the accountability results for the alternative school. There is a potential for regular schools to attempt to "game the system" that is further exacerbated in the high stakes environment. Like regular schools, the less time alternative schools have to work with students, the less progress the students will demonstrate on state tests. Further, like regular schools, increased numbers of lower performing students tested in alternative schools increase the likelihood of lower test results for the school. As one LEA superintendent so aptly put it, "I might be willing to sacrifice [the accountability results of] one alternative school in order to make all my other schools look good."

(d) Two requirements are in place, as part of the new accountability policy, to help monitor the number, percent, and demographics of students referred to alternative schools. Alternative schools are to report to their local boards of education both the number/percent and demographics of students referred to alternative schools by each sending school

(calculated by month) and the number/percent and demographics of students who return to their home schools (calculated by month).

Recommendation Seventeen: *Adding a requirement that the information referenced in(d) above be a reported item as a part of the ABCs report card or be reported as part of the ALP evaluation results or both, may encourage best practices and cooperation between regular and alternative schools to make decisions based on the best interests of students. Further, results in the ABCs Accountability Program should be monitored for alternative schools to make certain that staff have at least equal opportunity to earn incentive awards as regular schools. Other aspects referenced above need to be monitored over time and refinements may need to be made to ensure both students and alternative schools have a fair and effective accountability system.*

Accountability for Alternative Programs. While these requirements go a long way toward addressing accountability for officially designated schools, most ALPs are not official schools. Accountability for students in these programs is tied to the school in which the program is located. There are, however, alternative programs that serve several “feeder” schools. In those cases, districts determine whether each ALP student’s state test scores are returned for inclusion with the home-base school or are included with the accountability results of the school within which the alternative program is housed.

Legislation in the 1999 Session helps to address concerns about the effectiveness of ALPs by specifying new aspects of the required 15 components for each local safe school plan. These changes include requiring LEAs to identify measures of the effectiveness of efforts to assist academically and behaviorally at-risk students and an analysis of such measures for students referred to ALPs.

Recommendation Eighteen: *LEAs should develop procedures to assess the effectiveness of all ALPs, including both schools and programs. Any future statewide evaluations of ALPs should attempt to identify the measures used in each LEA and the results of their analyses.*

Student Accountability Standards: Impact on ALP Students

The Question Lingers: Who Is Responsible/Accountable for ALP Students? The new student accountability standards ratchet the stakes for students in ALPs. A student can get shuffled back and forth between his or her home-base school and the ALP, making no progress in either setting, and the only one left holding the bag is the student. Further, the potential for gaming the system is already described in the previous section on the new accountability policy for alternative schools. More than ever there is a need for a longitudinal database (SIMS replacement) for every student, making it easier to track individual progress over time, and documenting intervention strategies that have been tried

with students. Valuable instructional time is lost each time a different teacher has to begin anew with a student figuring out where to start. Each student needs well-designed, individualized intervention plans that are used to guide educational decisions, and we need to stick with each student until we get somewhere. Each year the ALP evaluation results point to the fact that the longer students are enrolled (up to a year), the better their school-related outcomes. Student progress needs to be stabilized before they are returned to the regular school setting. Some students may need to remain in the ALP setting. When students are returned to their home-base schools they need appropriate supports so that they may continue their progress instead of throwing them back into the same conditions in which they failed the first time. We will never solve the problem of improving outcomes for at-risk youth until we address the joint responsibility that is needed between regular schools and ALPs for each student to succeed.

Recommendation Nineteen: The SIMS replacement will greatly help the tracking of individual progress of students in and out of ALPs. The requirement as of January 1, 2000, that regular schools and ALPs work more closely to develop intervention plans for ALP students will help also. It is recommended that longer placements be considered working toward stabilizing students in pre-defined areas of need, before students transition back into the regular school. There is growing support from alternative educators and other central administrators working to improve services to at-risk youth for students referred to ALPs to continue to be carried on the rolls of the home-base schools. Many believe that is the only way that regular schools will have a vested interest in sharing resources and providing needed supports for students with whom they are unsuccessful.

Mastery Learning. A number of ALPs offer course credit to students when they obtain a designated score on End-of-Course tests, sometimes with little instruction in the course and without the “seat time” requirement, which are conditions of course credit in regular schools. The practice of “flexing” instructional time is enticing because it helps students who are sometimes seemingly hopelessly behind in graduation credits have some hope of catching up to earn a high school diploma without spending lots of additional semesters or years in school. While this strategy is an attempt to address a serious problem, it is creating other even more disconcerting problems. First, EOC tests are not designed for the purpose of determining credit for a course without course completion. Second, ALP students, already disadvantaged, are further disadvantaged by limiting the range of the course content they are taught and the opportunity for interactions, discussions, and experiences that enhance learning and understanding. Instead of trading one set of problems for another, ALPs must find strategies for providing flexible options that still encompass meaningful learning. Further, what is “mastery learning” without a common definition and consistent, rigorous standards for how “mastery” will be demonstrated in each subject or content area? “Seat time” requirements for course credit are set in State Board policy for students in regular schools. Certainly, we do not want to create a double set of standards for learning that requires less of students in ALPs than in regular schools. Instead we need to provide the resources, technical expertise, and leadership so that all youth have appropriate opportunities

to earn a high school diploma.

Recommendation Twenty: *It is recommended that creative strategies be identified for helping students who are seriously behind in graduation credits earn sufficient credits to “catch up” so that they can graduate with a high school diploma within a reasonable amount of time. Allowing students to progress at their own rate but in an accelerated fashion with expanded opportunities to learn is important. Web-based learning is one possibility. Further, it is recommended that the possibility be explored of designing a standard set of rigorous, criterion-referenced tests, aligned with the NC Standard Course of Study, for use in ALPs. This customized assessment system would be used to appropriately determine student mastery of broad-based content knowledge to insure that students graduate with a solid academic foundation.*

ALP Transportation Issues. Another issue potentially impacting progress on student accountability standards for ALP students has to do with transportation issues. Because school buses are expensive, LEAs usually stagger school start times in order to use a limited number of buses to cover more than one bus route. Further, school districts receive transportation funds based on efficiency ratings that are calculated by the state and have to do with the number of miles students live from their schools. LEAs tend to avoid practices that negatively impact their transportation funding. In cases where providing transportation for ALP students would require more school buses or would negatively impact efficiency rating, some LEAs make one of two choices that may save them transportation funds, but may not be in the best interest of students attending ALPs. Some choose either not to provide transportation for students attending ALPs or they choose to use fewer buses, which makes for very long bus rides. In the first case, not providing transportation for ALP students can lead to higher rates of absenteeism. In the second case, where there are very long bus rides, ALP students at times report spending more time riding the bus to and from school than they spend in the classroom. Their instructional day is cut short. Both practices will negatively impact the amount of instructional time for ALP students and therefore limits opportunities to learn.

Recommendation Twenty-One: *State law requires LEAs that provide transportation to one student to provide transportation to all students. Some LEAs do not provide transportation for ALP students. It is recommended all LEAs be required to provide transportation services to students attending ALPs. It is further recommended that changes be made such that LEA efficiency ratings are not impacted negatively by increased mileage necessary to provide transportation to all ALP students. It is also recommended that maximum times be set for lengths of bus rides for students and that strategies be developed to work within those limits so that students do not have to cut their school day short or exhaust themselves with excessively long bus rides.*

Programmatic Features of Successful ALPs

While there is no one “best model” for ALPs and different purposes may dictate different best practices, some features were consistent among ALPs that seem to be making a difference in students’ lives. These programs usually began with a fairly clear understanding of particular needs to be addressed by the program and a deep concern for the students whom the education system had failed. A focused mission and program philosophy guided the development of most of the programs, typically with unwavering commitment to the program purpose in spite of persistent and difficult obstacles. Visionary, entrepreneurial, creative, “mover-shaker” types of leaders guided most of these ALPs. Some unique features that the evaluators termed “bright ideas” are also mentioned. Finally, some issues and recommendations continue to emerge from the data collected over the four years of the evaluation.

Small Size, More Individual Attention. While many ALPs strive to provide education based on the individual needs of students, it seems almost axiomatic to say that small size makes this possible. While over one-third of teachers returning surveys in the study on qualification of ALP staff indicated they teach 15 or fewer students per day, one-fourth of the teachers have over 32 students per day (ranging up to 185 student per day). The most teachers (36%) noted low student-teacher ratios as the most significant factor in making ALPs effective.

Some of the most exciting programs are small and provide individual and intensive interventions in both academic and behavioral/emotional areas. Since students enrolled in ALPs typically have multiple problems, including poor decision-making and problem-solving skills, individual counseling and small group work is part of the educational program. As students with more serious needs are enrolled, size likely becomes even more of a factor in effectiveness. This does not mean that programs with larger numbers are automatically ineffective. This issue relates to the purpose of the ALP and the types of students that it serves, as well as the need for a continuum of services within the LEA and its community.

Continued Focus on Academic Rigor. The continued poor performance of ALP students as a whole on statewide assessments reinforces the consistent, persistent need for high academic expectations and intervention and acceleration programs of an intense nature. Strong instructional efforts must be paired with, not replaced by, services to address problems in other aspects of a student’s life. Teacher survey results corroborate other findings on the academic needs of ALP students; they rated the vast majority of their students as below grade level. We must not back away from serious attention to academic success for these students. *Any hope for future success in work or a post-secondary education setting is best assured by academic success and high school graduation.* A sense of hope requires the belief that one can influence the future; the ability to influence one’s own future requires a sense of self-efficacy; and a sense of self-efficacy requires successful completion of the tasks at hand, including succeeding in school. The attitude reflected by

“Our students cannot be expected to achieve because they have so many problems and have such low self-esteem” is not one likely to promote optimal success with students. Rather, ALP and other educators need an attitude of “Unless our students meet the academic standards, they will be less successful in resolving other life problems and improving their self-esteem.” And the case studies show that there are ALPs that embody that attitude.

Hands-On / Experiential Learning, Based on Rigorous Content with Focused Instruction. As students experience academic failure they usually become increasingly more difficult to motivate. Students in ALP settings are often on the extreme end of the continuum in terms of failure experiences. One project director described the students enrolled in her program as having “a gnawing sense of inadequacy and failure within the regular classroom; a sense of futility, ineptitude, and purposelessness, frequently exacerbated by constant negative feedback from parents, teachers, and peers.” Such feedback sometimes results in angry, defensive behavior. One LEA superintendent interviewed, who had years of experience with at-risk youth, put it this way, “If it looks like school or smells like school, they don’t want anything to do with it.” A regular school principal added that students would rather appear “bad” than “stupid”. Re-engaging these students in fruitful learning is challenging at best. ALP educators tell us that what works is to find ways to connect learning to individual student interests, to break learning down into manageable units, and to combine direct instruction of the content with hands-on demonstrations of learning. Thoughtfully enriching units of instruction with “experiences” to bring the essential learning outcomes “alive” is also effective. Exploratory and problem-solving strategies can make content and concepts more meaningful.

Strategies for experiential learning include using technology to conduct virtual tours of famous art galleries or historical battlegrounds as well as actually taking students to those places. Bringing local writers, artists, musicians, architects, mechanics, plumbers into the classroom to talk to students about how they do their work may help students see meaningful applications of the things they are learning in their classrooms. The use of field trips, classroom “activities”, and even using technology, is means, not ends, to motivate students, address diverse learning styles, and create meaning. The teacher must have a clear understanding of, and focus on, specific and important learning targets coupled with a strong foundation in rigorous content to drive the selection of appropriate methods for hands-on or experiential learning.

Personal Connections with Students. It is clear from the case studies that one of the important features of successful ALPs is the connection between the adults and students. Comments from students in particular focused on the caring nature of the relationships in the ALP, the willingness of staff to go the extra mile, and the sense that staff believed in them. These comments obviously result from staff effort that exceeds a typical workday or merely content instruction. Factors likely to increase the possible personal connections between staff and students should be carefully considered by LEAs in designing ALPs. Such factors might include low staff-student ratio, smaller program size, programs focused on particular types of needs, and – especially – the recruitment of special people. Comments by LEA

administrators, regular school educators, and school board members all pointed to the importance of finding the “right people.”

To Be of Use. To young people who have experienced limited success in school and feel a sense of inadequacy in most areas of their lives, being useful to other people may be one important way to build confidence and a sense of efficacy. While there is limited data from the current evaluation, the ALPs incorporating service learning or other strategies that link students to service for others are worthy of consideration by other ALPs.

Administrator and Teacher Qualifications

Background

The 1999 Session of the General Assembly, in HB 168, amended GS 115C-12 (24) stating that the *State Board of Education shall review the qualifications of teachers assigned to alternative schools and alternative learning programs. The State Board shall include this information in the annual report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on alternative schools and alternative learning programs prior to the convening of the 2000 Regular Session of the 1999 General Assembly.*

Additionally, GS 115C-47 (32a) was amended to state that the *General Assembly urges local boards to adopt policies that prohibit superintendents from assigning to any alternative learning program any professional school employee who has received within the last three years a rating on a formal evaluation that is less than “above standard”.*

ALP Teacher Survey

Methodology

Purpose of surveys. In December 1999, 1300 teacher surveys were sent to staff in 199 alternative learning programs (ALPs). The primary purpose of the surveys was to collect information about demographics, credentials, primary work assignments, and training needs of ALP teachers.

Survey return rates. Teacher surveys were received from 73 percent (145) of the 199 ALPs. Because some teachers did not identify the ALP in which they work, the percentage of ALPs for which teacher surveys was obtained is a conservative estimate. Of the 1300 teacher surveys distributed, 573 were returned, which represents an overall return rate of 44%. Weather problems causing extensive school closings were a factor in the return of surveys. Efforts to obtain surveys will continue in an attempt to increase return rates and this should be considered a preliminary report of the findings. However, the results of the teacher survey should be fairly indicative for ALP teachers as a group since nearly half of them responded.

Survey return rate by grade-level categories

Grade-Level Categories	Frequency	Percent
K-12	3	1
6-8	113	20
9-12	190	33
6-12	220	38
Other	24	4
Unknown	23	4

Table 1. Surveys received by ALP grade-level groupings

Returned surveys cluster predominantly in three grade-level categories (see Table 1). At times the survey results will be analyzed for the three primary grade-level groupings including (1) middle school ALPs serving grades 6-8, (2) high school ALPs serving grades 9-12, and (3) middle/high school ALPs serving grades 6-12. Specific analysis will not be provided for *elementary* category because there were only three surveys returned for that category and the results would not be representative. Further, the results will not be provided for the *other* category since it includes an array of ALPs with unusual patterns of grade levels with no common basis for comparison. Of course analysis cannot be broken out for surveys in the *unknown* category since the respondents did not indicate the grade levels served by their ALPs. Most often this report will focus on results for **all** teacher responses to the survey, which will include surveys from the *elementary*, *other*, and *unknown* categories of ALP grade-level groupings.

Teacher Demographics

Gender and Ethnicity

Gender				Ethnicity					
% Male		% Female		% White		% Black		% Other	
State	ALPs	State	ALPs	State	ALPs	State	ALPs	State	ALPs
20	34	80	66	84	69	14	26	2	5

Table 2. Gender and ethnicity in ALPs compared to State

- Female teachers outnumber male teachers by about two to one in ALPs in contrast to the general trend for teachers in the state, where females outnumber male teachers by a ratio of four to one. Still, there is a higher proportion of male teachers in ALPs (34%) than in the general teaching population in the state (20%).

- There is a somewhat lower proportion of male teachers in middle school ALPs (30%) than in high school ALPs (34%) and middle/high ALPs (38%). [not shown in chart]
- While the percentage of white teachers is greater than Black teachers in ALPs - 69 percent compared to 26 percent - the percentage of Black teachers in ALPs is almost double that of the general teaching population of the state (14%).
- There is a higher proportion of Black teachers for high school ALPs (31%) than at middle school ALPs (29%) or middle/high ALPs (22%). [not shown in chart]

Age

Range of Age	Percent of ALP Teachers
25 years or younger	5
26 to 30 years	11
31 to 40	22
41 to 50	32
51 to 60	25
61 or older	5

Table 3. Age ranges of ALP teachers

- Nearly two-thirds of the teaching staff in ALPs reported their age as being over forty years of age.
- Only sixteen percent of ALP teacher respondents are under thirty years of age.

Background and Characteristics of ALP Teachers

Preparation of ALP Teachers

Degree	Percent	
	State*	ALP
Bachelors	64	58
Masters	34	36
Sixth year/specialist	2	3
Doctorate	1	1
Other	0.1	2

*State data is from 1998-99

Table 4. Degree status for ALP and State teachers

- About forty percent of ALP teachers have earned beyond a four year bachelors degree, either a masters, sixth year, or doctorate degree.
- The pattern of educational background of ALP teachers is fairly consistent with that of teachers across the state except that slightly more (six percent) ALP teachers have post-bachelors degrees.

License	Percent	
	State*	ALP
Initial License	13	16
Continuing License	69	65
Provisional License	8	9
Lateral and Other License	10	10

*State data is from 1998-99

Table 5. Licensure status for ALP and teachers across the State

- Licensure trends for ALP teachers are similar to trends for the teachers across the state. Although there are slightly more (3%) ALP teachers who are initially licensed and slightly fewer (4%) with a continuing license, there are about equal percentages of ALP teachers with a provisional or lateral-entry license compared to teachers across the state.
- The percent of teachers with either a provisional or lateral entry license is higher in middle school ALPs (29%) than in high school (12%) or middle/high school ALPs (16%). [not shown in chart]

Teaching experience

Total Years of Teaching Experience	Percent of Teachers	
	State	ALPs
One Year or less	14	10
2 to 3 years	10	14
4 to 5 years	8	10
6 to 9 years	12	13
10 to 20 years	29	20
Over 20 years	28	33

Table 6. Total years of teaching experience for ALP teachers compared to State

- Trends for total years teaching experience are fairly similar for ALP teachers compared to teachers across the state.

Years of Teaching Experience	Percent of ALP Teachers	
	Teaching Total	Teaching In ALP
One Year or less	10	27
2 to 3 years	14	30
4 to 5 years	10	20
6 to 9 years	13	13
10 to 20 years	20	9
Over 20 years	33	1

Table 7. Years total teaching experience and in experience in ALP

- While ten percent of ALP teachers reported having one year or less of teaching experience, over one-fourth are new to the ALP setting.
- About sixty percent of ALP teachers have been teaching in that environment from two to nine years.
- Only ten percent of survey respondents reported having taught in ALPs for ten or more years. This finding may reflect the extensive growth of ALPs in recent years.

Teaching Assignment Status

Teacher assignments by ALP grade-level categories

ALP Grade-Level Categories	Percent of Teachers
6-8	20
9-12	33
6-12	38

Table 8. Percent of teachers by ALP grade-level categories

Table 8 shows the number and percent of teachers according to the three primary categories of grade-level groupings served by ALPs.

- The highest percent of teachers (38%) reported they work in middle/high school ALPs serving grades 6-12.
- A third of the teachers responding reported they work in high school ALPs, and twenty percent reported they work in middle school ALPs.

Full-time and part-time teaching status

ALP teachers were asked to report their teaching status as full or part-time and whether they also had teaching responsibilities in a regular school.

- More than eighty percent of the responding ALP teachers reported they work full-time in ALPs.
- About ten percent reported they work full-time in a regular school and part-time in the ALP in the evening.
- Only five percent responded that they teach part-time in the ALP and part-time in a regular school.

Teaching in ALP by choice versus by transfer

ALP teachers were asked to report how they came to work in an ALP.

- Almost all of respondents (90%) reported they came to teach at the ALP by choice, either applying for the job or being recruited for the job.

- Across grade levels, slightly fewer than twenty percent came to teach in their ALP as a result of being administratively assigned or transferred there.
- About ten percent fewer middle school teachers (80%) reported teaching by choice than do middle/high and high school ALP teachers (both 90%).

Primary teaching assignment in ALP

Primary Teaching Assignment	Frequency	Percent
English/Language Arts	105	19
Math	81	15
Social Studies/History	66	12
Science	52	10
Exceptional Children	35	6
All Subjects	24	4
Physical Education/Health	23	4
All Core Subjects – Grades 6-8	23	4
Computer Education/Keyboarding	16	3
Reading	15	3
Math and Science	15	3
Vocational Education	15	3
Reading/Language Arts/Social Studies	15	3
Family and Consumer Science	13	2
Reading/Language Arts/Math	13	2
All Core Subjects – Grades 9-12	10	2
Varies	4	1
Music/Art	4	1
Counseling	3	1
Science/History/Social Studies	3	1
English as a Second Language	2	0.4
Agricultural Science	2	0.4
All Core Subjects – Grades 4-5	2	0.4
Life Skills/Learning Skills	2	0.4
Foreign Language	1	0.2

Table 9. Primary teaching assignments

Primary teaching assignments. Of the 573 surveys returned, about ninety-five percent of respondents were teachers, two percent were teacher assistants, and one percent were counselors and social workers with teaching responsibilities. Approximately two-thirds (69%) of the teachers reported that their primary teaching assignments were in core curriculum areas, with reading/language arts/writing followed by mathematics, social studies/history, and science. Other areas less frequently mentioned were computer

education/keyboarding (3%), vocational education (3%), home economics (2%), and physical education (4%). Only four teachers mentioned art/music and one mentioned foreign language as the primary teaching assignment.

About half the teacher respondents reported spending all day teaching in the area they reported as their primary teaching assignment. Nearly twenty-five percent reported spending three-quarters of the day and the other twenty-five percent reported spending less than half the day in their teaching in their area of primary assignment.

Teaching In- or Out-of-Field

Teachers were asked the extent to which they are licensed for their areas of teaching responsibility.

Extent licensed for grade level(s) and subject(s) taught in ALP

Extent Licensed in Field	Percent of ALP Teachers	
	Grade Levels	Subjects
All (100%)	76	61
Most (>50%)	12	20
Some (<50%)	4	8
None (0%)	8	11

Table 10. Percent of teachers licensed for areas taught

- Most ALP teachers are licensed in all grade levels and subjects they are teaching, about three-quarters in all grade levels and about six out of ten teachers in all subjects.
- In addition to the sixty percent who reported being licensed in all subjects taught, twenty percent of ALP teachers reported they are licensed in **most** subjects they are teaching. Combined with the eight percent who reported being licensed in less than 50 percent of subjects taught and the 11 percent who reported not being licensed in **any** subjects taught, there are about forty percent of ALP teachers teaching one or more subjects in which they are not licensed.
- One in ten of these teachers are not licensed in any of the subjects they are teaching.
- A higher percentage of high school ALP teachers are licensed in all grade levels taught (94%), than in middle school (84%) or middle/high school ALPs (86%). [not shown in chart]

Extent licensed in subjects taught by ALP grade-level categories

Extent licensed in subjects taught	ALP Grade-Level Categories		
	6-8	9-12	6-12
	Percent	Percent	Percent
All (100%)	62	66	55
Most (>50%)	17	17	26
Some (<50%)	7	8	9
None (0%)	14	10	10

Table 11. Percent of teachers licensed for subject areas taught

- More than 60% of teachers in middle school (6-8) and high school (9-12) ALPs reported that they are licensed in all of the subjects taught. The percent is slightly less for those teaching in middle/high school ALPs (55%).
- While ten percent of teachers in high and middle/high school ALPs are not licensed to teach any of the subjects they are teaching, a slightly higher percentage (14%) of middle school ALP teachers are not licensed in any of the subjects they are teaching.

Extent to which specific subjects are being taught without licensure

Subject	Frequency	Percent
Math	81	21
Science	77	20
English/Language Arts	61	16
Social Studies	45	12
Reading	26	7
PE/Health	25	6
History	18	5
Computer	19	5
Geography	10	3
Art	7	2
Creative Writing	7	2
Family & Consumer Science	9	2
Drama	2	.5
Foreign Language	2	.5

Table 12. Subject areas in which ALP teachers are teaching but *not* licensed

Although most of the teachers are licensed in the subjects they teach, the high percentages of teachers not holding appropriate licenses were found in the core academic areas.

- Twenty percent of ALP teachers reported they are teaching mathematics when they are not licensed to teach in that area. The same percentage was reported in the area of science.
- Sixteen percent of ALP teachers reported they are teaching English/language arts and seven percent are teaching reading when they are not licensed in the area.
- Twelve percent of ALP teachers are teaching social studies, five percent history, and three percent are teaching geography when they are not licensed in the areas.

Teaching Load

Different subjects taught daily. The number of different subjects that ALP teachers reported teaching daily ranged from one to sixteen. About eighty percent of ALP teachers reported that they teach four or fewer subjects a day. Of those teachers, about 45 percent teach one or two subjects daily. Nearly twenty percent of respondents reported teaching from 5 to 9 subjects daily. Larger numbers of subjects taught per day probably results from having students in a given class working independently on different subjects.

Number of students (unduplicated) taught daily. The number of different students ALP teachers reported teaching per day varied widely, ranging from 1 to 185. Thirty-eight percent of responses reported teaching from 1-15 students a day. Thirty-six percent of teachers reported teaching from 16 to 32 students daily and about twenty-five percent of respondents reported teaching more than 32 students per day.

Range of grade levels within a given class. ALP teachers reported teaching contexts in which there are students of different grade levels within a single class period. The number of different grade levels reported within one class ranged from 1 to 12. Ninety-four percent of ALP teachers reported having students from one to four different grade levels within a single class period. Of those, fifty-four percent had three or four different grade levels represented within a single class period. Thus, at least half the teachers have several grade levels at one time.

Different subjects taught within a given class period. ALP teachers sometimes have to manage teaching situations in which different subjects are taught within a single class period. The number of different subjects that respondents reported being taught within a given class period ranged from one to nine. The majority of ALP teachers, fifty-five percent, reported teaching only one subject at a time during any given class period. Another nearly twenty-five percent reported teaching two subjects, and an additional ten percent reported teaching three subjects during a class period. Only about ten percent of ALP teachers teach four or more subjects within a given class period.

Instructional level of most students taught. More than three quarters of the ALP teachers who responded to the survey reported that the instructional level of most of their students is below grade level. Slightly more than twenty percent reported that the instructional level of most of their students is at grade level. Less than one percent of teachers reported their students are above grade level instructionally. A higher percentage of middle (85%) and middle/high school (84%) ALP teachers reported that the instructional level of most of their students was below grade level than high school ALP teachers (66%).

Teacher Training

Extent to which teachers have had helpful training in specific topics. Teachers were asked to indicate areas of helpful training they have already received from a list of twenty-five skill areas important for working with students at risk of academic failure, dropping out of school, and/or involvement in juvenile crime. Table 13 indicates the percentage of teachers marking specified topics for which they have had helpful training, listed in descending order. If topics were not marked as helpful, it could be because teachers had *no* training in that area or had training but found it *not* helpful.

Areas of Helpful Training	Percent
Discipline and behavior management	59
Instructional methods/strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles	56
Working with varying academic levels	53
Teaching through group discussion	50
Conflict resolution	50
Building teams and working collaboratively	50
Teaching social skills	48
Peer mediation	47
Strategies for working with students who are unmotivated and low achieving	41
Teaching basic literacy skills in reading, writing, math to older students	41
Working with students with disabilities	40
Instructional methods/strategies to accelerate learning	40
Service learning	38
Strategies to involve parents	37
Using technology to fullest extent	37
Strategies to help students who do not pass the competency requirement	35
Working with suspended and expelled youth	35
Experiential methods to educate students	34
Strategies to help students who score below Level 3 on state tests	33
Working with adjudicated youth	30
Working with students with unstable home environments	30
Working with community agencies to provide/improve services for ALP students	26
Working with neglected or abused children	25
Working with students who are abusing substances	24
Working with students returning from state institutions	21

Table 13. Teachers rating training topics as helpful

- There were six areas of training that fifty percent or more of ALP teachers have received that they rated as being especially helpful. They were as follows: (1) discipline and behavior management, (2) instructional methods and strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles, (3) working with varying academic levels, (4)

teaching through group discussion, (5) conflict resolution, and (6) building teams and working collaboratively.

- At the other end of the ratings continuum, there were four areas of training in which one-fourth or fewer ALP teachers reported having had helpful training, including (1) working with students returning from state institutions (e.g., training schools, psychiatric hospitals), (2) working with students who are abusing substances, (3) working with neglected or abused children, and (4) working with community agencies to improve services for students in ALP.

Extent to which teachers need training in specific areas. Teachers were also asked to indicate from the same list of twenty-five skill areas, the topics in which they still need training in order to work successfully with the students in their own particular ALPs.

Areas of Needed Training	Percent
Working with students who are abusing substances	61
Working with students returning from state institutions (e.g., training schools)	61
Strategies to help students who score below Level 3 on state tests	60
Working with students with unstable home environments	60
Working with neglected or abused children	60
Working with community agencies to provide/improve services for ALP students	56
Strategies to help students who do not pass the competency requirement	55
Strategies for working with students who are unmotivated and low achieving	55
Using technology to fullest extent	53
Working with adjudicated youth	51
Strategies to involve parents	50
Experiential methods to educate students	48
Working with suspended and expelled youth	47
Teaching basic literacy skills in reading, writing, math to older students	45
Instructional methods/strategies to accelerate learning	45
Working with students with disabilities	43
Service learning	39
Teaching social skills	39
Conflict resolution	38
Peer mediation	36
Working with varying academic levels	35
Instructional methods/strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles	34
Discipline and behavior management	33
Building teams and working collaboratively	32
Teaching through group discussion	31

Table 14. Teachers rating training topics most needed

Areas of needed training almost exactly reverse the order of areas of helpful training received.

- Judging from their responses to the survey, ALP teachers clearly have extensive training needs. From one- to two-thirds of teachers expressed need for all twenty-five areas of training listed in the survey.
- There were five areas of training that were rated as most needed by about sixty percent of teachers. They include (1) working with students who are abusing substances, (2) working with students returning from state institutions, such as training schools and mental health facilities, (3) strategies to help students who score below Level 3 on state tests, (4) working with students from unstable home environments (e.g., foster homes, homeless, runaways), and (5) working with abused and neglected children. It should be noted that three of these areas (numbers 1, 2, and 5) were the topics in which the fewest teachers reported having had helpful training and two (numbers 3 and 4) were among the bottom of helpful training topics.
- At least half the ALP teacher respondents reported needing training in six additional areas including: (1) working with community agencies to improve services to students in ALPs, (2) strategies to help students who do not pass the competency requirements, (3) strategies for working with students who are unmotivated and low achieving, (4) using technology to the fullest extent, (5) working with adjudicated youth, and (6) strategies to involve parents.

Program Effectiveness Issues

Teachers were asked to respond to four open-ended questions concerning program effectiveness issues. In each case, teachers were asked to give one answer, so that the total analysis would provide a good profile of the most significant concerns, factors, and suggestions statewide.

Factors that make ALPs effective. Ninety-five percent of the teachers surveyed responded to this open-ended question. The most frequent response (36%) was the low student-teacher ratios in ALPs. The second most frequent response (21%) was staff support, versatility, and motivation. Fifteen percent said that the individual instruction and attention students received made the program effective and nearly ten percent said the program gave opportunities for academic intervention.

Barriers to optimal effectiveness of program. Ninety-three percent of teachers surveyed responded to this open-ended question. By far the largest percentage of responses (35%) had to do with students' lack of motivation, disruptive behavior, and "poor attitude". Fourteen percent of teachers responded that the biggest barrier to ALP effectiveness has to do with students' home environments including things like poor parenting skills or lack of

cooperation from the home. Ten percent of teachers responded that student attendance is the biggest barrier.

ALP evidence to document success. Eighty-six percent of teachers surveyed responded to this open-ended question. The single, most consistently mentioned source of evidence used to gauge success is student scores on state achievement tests. Nearly half of the teacher respondents reported using state test scores to evaluate effectiveness. By contrast, the second and third most frequently mentioned sources of evidence are (1) a combination of attendance, grades, and behavior, mentioned by 13 percent of teachers, and (2) the number of graduations and successful class completions, mentioned by 11 percent of teachers.

Sources of Evidence	Frequency	Percent
State/standardized tests scores	229	46
Attendance, grades, behavior documentation	66	13
Number of successful student class completions/graduation	53	11
Number of students returning to regular program	27	6
Continuous evaluation/attendance, behavior monitoring	26	5
Pre and post tests, progress reports, home notes	20	4
Do not know	19	4
Non-specific (all kinds)	15	3
None	10	2
Individual portfolios	8	2
IEPs, report cards, attendance records	6	1
Observations, recommendations, evaluations, IEPs, and 504s	5	1
Daily roster, monthly disciplinary referrals	3	1
Disciplinary forms	3	1
School improvement plan	3	1
Pre/post grades	2	0.4

Table 15. Evidence collected to document student progress

Strategies to attract and retain quality ALP teachers. Eighty-nine percent of teachers surveyed responded to this question. By far the most frequent response, given by 43% of respondents, was to increase salaries, provide bonuses and incentives. By contrast, the next most frequent response was given by only 10 percent of teachers, which was to provide training in dealing with ALP students and provide stress relief for teachers. About the same percent (9%) responded (1) provide more resources, personnel, and better facilities and (2) a strong, supportive, flexible principal and administration are needed to attract and retain quality teachers.

Summary of Teacher Results

1. There are more male teachers in ALPs than in the general teaching population in the state. The ratio of female to male teachers in ALPs is about two to one, while the state trend is about four to one. There are also more Black teachers in ALPs than in the general teaching population. This is an important trend for the ALP student population, where about fifty percent of the students are Black and from sixty to seventy percent are male.
2. ALPs tend to have teachers who are over forty years of age (nearly two-thirds) and who have ten or more years experience (about fifty percent). Trends are similar to the state for total years of teaching experience.
3. About sixty percent of ALP teachers reported they are licensed in all subjects taught. The subjects most frequently being taught without a license include mathematics and science (both 20 percent), English/language arts (sixteen percent), and reading (seven percent).
4. The most frequently mentioned factor in making ALPs effective was low teacher-student ratio (36%). Over one-third of the teachers identified the most significant barrier to program effectiveness as a student problem (low motivation, disruptive behavior, poor attitude) and 14 percent named something about the students' home situation. Attribution for barriers to effectiveness to students and/or their home life by half of the teachers is interesting, given that students are placed in programs *because* of these types of problems.
5. While class size tends to be small, teaching load varies widely across ALPs reflecting the wide range in purposes, student needs, and resources. For example, while about eighty percent of ALP teachers reported teaching four or fewer subjects per day, twenty percent of ALP teachers reported teaching from 5 to 9 subjects per day. Ninety-four percent reported having students from one to four grade levels being taught within the same class period, where three-quarters of ALP teachers reported that the instructional level of students is below grade level.
6. ALP teachers clearly have extensive training needs. From one- to two-thirds of teachers expressed need for the entire list of twenty-five topic areas surveyed which are relevant to working with a student population at risk of academic failure, dropping out of school, and/or involvement in juvenile crime. Five areas rated as most needed by about sixty percent of respondents include working with students who are abusing substances, returning from state institutions (e.g., training schools), scoring below Level 3 on state tests, from unstable home environments, and are abused and neglected.

7. When asked what is the single most important thing that can be done to attract and retain quality teaching staff in ALPs, the response given by most teachers was to increase salaries, provide bonuses and incentives.

ALP Principal Survey

Purpose of surveys. In January 2000, 199 surveys were distributed to ALP principals / administrators. The primary purpose of the surveys was to collect information about demographics, credentials, primary work assignments, and training needs. In addition, principals/administrators were asked to report, in aggregate form, data about the percentages of teachers receiving each of six performance appraisal ratings, based on the previous year's final evaluation of ALP teacher performance.

Survey return rates. Responses were obtained from ninety of the 199 ALP Principals / Administrators who received a survey, resulting in a return rate of 45%. Weather problems were a factor in the return of surveys. Efforts will continue in an attempt to increase the number of surveys returned from ALP staff and this should be considered a preliminary report of the findings. However, the results to date should be fairly representative given they include data from nearly half of the ALP administrators.

Grade-Level Categories	Frequency	Percent
K-5	1	1
6-8	22	24
9-12	27	30
6-12	33	37
Other	5	6
Unknown	2	2

Table 16. Principal surveys received by ALP grade-level groupings

Survey return rate for ALP grade-level groupings. One fourth of the surveys returned were from administrators of middle school ALPs serving grades 6-8. Thirty percent of the responses were from administrators of high school ALPs and 37 percent were from administrators of ALPs serving grades 6-12. Analysis of data will not be reported for the elementary or "other" categories of ALPs. There were so few responses in those categories that the results would not be representative. As with teacher surveys, when analysis is provided for grade-level groupings, results will only be reported for the three primary categories including middle school (grades 6-8), high school (grades 9-12), and middle/high school ALPs (grades 6-12). Otherwise, results for all surveys returned are included in the information provided.

Demographics of ALP Administrators

Gender and Ethnicity

Gender				Ethnicity					
% Male		% Female		% White		% Black		% Other	
State	ALPs	State	ALPs	State	ALPs	State	ALPs	State	ALPs
53	64	47	36	76	65	22	33	1	2

Table 17. Gender and ethnicity for ALP principals compared to State

Table 17 displays ethnic and gender comparisons for principals in ALPs and schools across the state using data from the 64 ALP principals who responded to the survey.

- There is a higher proportion of male and Black principals in ALPs than in schools across the state.

Age of ALP administrators

Range of Age	Percent of ALP Administrators
25 years or younger	0
26 to 30 years	1
31 to 40	3
41 to 50	44
51 to 60	44
61 or older	7

Table 18. Age ranges of ALP administrators

- Equal proportions (44%) of ALP administrators are in the age ranges 41-50 and 51-60, accounting for nearly ninety percent of the respondents. Only seven percent are over sixty and four percent are under forty years of age.

Background and Characteristics of ALP Administrators

Official Title	Percent
Principal	71
Assistant Principal	6
Director	16
Coordinator	4
Lead Teacher	3

Table 19. Official titles of ALP administrators

- Of the ninety administrators who returned surveys, sixty four (70%) reported they are *principals* of ALPs.
- The next most frequently reported title was *director* (16 percent).
- Six percent or fewer ALPs are operated by assistant principals, coordinators, and *lead teachers*.

ALP assignment by choice versus transfer. ALP administrators were asked whether they came to work in an ALP by choice, by being recruited or by their own request, versus coming to work there as a result of being transferred.

- Two-thirds of the administrators surveyed reported they came to work in an ALP by choice.
- One third of the administrators surveyed reported they came to work in the ALP as a result of being assigned or transferred there.

Preparation of ALP administrators

Highest Degree	Percent
Bachelors	3
Masters	62
Sixth year/specialist	26
Doctorate	9

Table 20. Degree status for ALP administrators

- While about two-thirds of ALP administrators hold a masters degree, a fourth have earned a sixth year specialist degree, and one in ten has earned a doctorate.

Area of Licensure	Percent
Principal	93
Instructional Specialist	19
Supervisor	22
Superintendent	24

Table 21. Areas of licensure by percent of ALP administrators

Note: Since personnel may be licensed in more than one area, percents total more than 100.

- Although seventy percent of respondents were hired under the position title of principal, ninety-three percent of ALP administrator respondents report that they hold a principal’s license.
- Another quarter of the ALP administrators reported that they hold a superintendent’s license.
- About twenty percent reported that they hold an Instructional Specialist license, which can provide important content expertise for an administrator serving as instructional leader.

Experience as a principal and total administrative

Years Experience	Percent/Principal of Any School	Percent/Principal or Director Any ALP	Percent /Total Administrative
None/zero	10	10	0
One year or less	11	22	1
2 to 3 years	13	27	5
4 to 5 years	14	22	8
6 to 9 years	19	14	18
10 to 20 years	27	3	47
Over 20 years	6	1	21

Table 22. Years experience as principal and total administrative

Table 22 displays responses to several questions ALP administrators were asked regarding their experience as principal of any school, as principal or director of an ALP, and their total years experience as an administrator of any type.

- Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported having from ten to twenty years experience and another six percent reported more than twenty years experience as a principal in any type of school. These figures total a third of respondents with ten or

more years experience in the principalship. An even higher percentage, nearly seventy percent, reported ten or more years of total administrative experience.

- Another third of respondents reported from four to nine years experience as a principal in any kind of school with about one quarter of respondents reporting the same number of years total administrative experience.
- While nearly 40 percent of respondents report having only one to five years experience as a principal, about 70 percent report that they have one to five years experience as administrator of an ALP, whatever their title might be.
- Ten percent of respondents, however, have never been principal of any kind of school and an equal percent have one or less years experience as a principal. About the same number of respondents reported they have no years of experience as an ALP administrator.

Salary classification of ALP principals. Legislation requires that the beginning classification for principals in alternative schools be Principal III for up to 33 teachers, and that salary classification be based on the number of teachers when supervising 33 or more teachers. Only ALP administrators hired as principals were asked to respond to the question. ALP principals were asked whether or not their salary is consistent with the legislation.

- Nearly 80 percent (47 of the 60 who responded) reported that their salary is consistent with the legislation.
- About twenty percent (13 of the 60 who responded) reported that their salary is not consistent with the legislation.

Duties and Authority of ALP Administrators

LEA organizational reporting system. ALP administrators were asked to whom they directly report.

To whom report	Percent
LEA Superintendent	56
Associate/Assistant Superintendent	18
Central Office Director/Coordinator	17
Principal of Regular School	10

Table 23. LEA reporting system for ALP administrators

- Nearly sixty percent of ALP administrators report directly to the LEA superintendent. About another twenty percent report to an associate or assistant superintendent.
- Seventeen percent of ALP administrators report to a central office administrator and ten percent report to the principal of a regular school.

Responsibility for more than one program. ALP principals were asked if they served as the “principal of record” for other programs, either on the same campus or other campuses, with which they have little or no involvement.

- About two-thirds responded that they are not the principal of record for programs with which they have little or no involvement, while the other third reported that they are.

Number of different programs within the ALP. ALP administrators were asked to report the number of different programs for which they are responsible within their ALP.

Number of different programs	Percent
One	60
Two	22
Three	13
Four	4
Five	1

Table 24. Number of different programs within a single ALP

- Sixty percent of ALP administrators report there is only one program in their ALP.
- About twenty percent report that two programs exist within their ALP.
- Nearly fifteen percent of administrators report that three programs exist within the ALP for which they are responsible.
- Only four percent of administrators report four and one percent report five different programs within their ALP.

Teaching responsibilities. ALP administrators were asked whether or not they have teaching responsibilities in addition to their administrative ones.

- Ninety percent of administrators reported that they do not have teaching responsibilities.

- Eight percent of administrators reported that they have part-time teaching responsibilities and two percent report they have full-time teaching responsibilities.

Authority to suspend and expel. ALP administrators were asked whether or not they have the authority to suspend and expel students. Distinctions were not made between short- and long- term suspensions, long term being in excess of ten days.

- All ALP administrators who responded to the survey, those who are principals and those with other types of positions, reported having authority to either suspend only or suspend and expel students.
- Nearly sixty percent reported that they have the authority only to suspend students.
- About forty percent reported they have the authority to both suspend and expel students.

Resources and involvement in LEA budgeting process. ALP administrators were asked three questions regarding resources and involvement in the LEA budgeting process.

ALP Budgeting Process	Percent
ALP administrator develops the budget for this ALP.	6
ALP administrator develops the budget with input from others.	29
The budget is developed by someone else with ALP input.	47
The budget is developed without ALP input.	18

Table 25. Development of ALP budget

- Most administrators, nearly half, report that the ALP budget is developed by someone else with their input.
- Nearly a third of ALP administrators report that they develop the budget with input from others.
- Almost one in five administrators report that the ALP budgets are developed without their input.
- Only six percent of administrators report that they develop the budget for their ALP.

ALP staff who do work for non-ALP programs. ALP administrators were asked if any of their staff provided services for non-ALP programs. The example was given of a school secretary, paid out of alternative education funds, but required to provide services to a regular school.

- More than eighty percent of ALP administrators said that none of their staff provided services for non-ALP programs.
- About fifteen percent reported that they did have staff who performed services for non-ALP programs.
- Other respondents, about 5%, said they did not know the answer to the question.

District Expenditure of State At-Risk Dollars	Percent	
	Yes	No
Know full range of programs and services funded?	57	43
Involved in district decisions about how to spend at risk allotment?	36	64

Table 26. District decisions about State at-risk student allotments

- Nearly sixty percent of ALP administrators reported they were knowledgeable of the full range of programs funded through their district’s At-Risk Student Fund, while 43 percent report that they are not aware.
- Nearly two-thirds of ALP administrators are not involved in district decisions about how state allotted at-risk dollars are spent, while the other third is involved in the decision-making process.

Information on Staff in ALPs

Number of Teachers	Percent of ALPs
1-5	52
6-13	39
19-28	9

Table 27. Number of full-time teachers

- This question was answered by seventy-five of the ninety program administrators who returned the survey. For those seventy-five ALPs, more than half of the ALP administrators reported there are between one and five full-time teachers in their ALP.
- About forty percent of administrators report having between six and thirteen full-time teachers in their ALP.

- The range of full-time teachers then jumps to between nineteen and twenty-eight, with nine percent of ALP administrators reporting that number.

ALP Administrator report of number of full-time teachers appropriately licensed. ALP administrators were asked to indicate, of the total number of full-time teachers, the number who are fully licensed in all grade levels and subjects taught. Of the ninety ALP administrators who returned a survey, only sixty-four administrators responded to this question. Of those sixty-four ALPs represented, 45 reported that 100 percent of full time teachers are fully licensed. Because the number responding to this question is so small, the data reported for the teachers in the other programs is difficult to interpret further. Variations in the sizes of ALPs also contribute to the difficulty with interpretation. All other factors being equal, maintaining a fully licensed staff of 100 teachers would likely be more of a challenge than maintaining a staff of five.

Full-time student support services personnel reported. Administrators were asked to report the number of full-time student support personnel working in their ALPs including counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses. They were also asked to report the number of media specialists, behavior management specialists, and school resource officers (SRO).

Student Support Staff in ALPs	ALP Grade-Level Categories							
	6-8		9-12		6-12			
	Total #		Total #		Total #		TOTAL #	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
Counselors	9	4	12	4	29	9	50	17
School Social Workers	5	3	3	5	8	8	16	16
School Psychologists	0	2	0	4	2	9	2	15
School Nurses	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Media Specialists	0	2	2	3	3	2	5	7
TOTAL	14	11	18	16	42	28	74	55

Table 28. Total number of full- and part-time student support staff in ALPs

- Out of the eighty-two programs that responded to the question analyzed above, ALP administrators reported a total of 74 full-time student support personnel in the five categories listed in the above table. Of those positions, most (57%) are reported in the middle/high school ALPs. An additional 55 part-time support staff are reported, again with the highest percentage (51%) in middle/high school ALPs.
- Of the eighty-two programs analyzed for this question, for the student support positions a total of 50 full-time and 17 part-time counselors, 16 full-time and 16 part-time school social workers, 2 full-time and 15 part-time school psychologists, 1 full-

time school nurse, and 5 full-time and 7 part-time media specialists were reported across all programs.

SRO* And Behavior Management Specialists in ALPs	ALP Grade-Level Categories							
	6-8		9-12		6-12			
	Total #		Total #		Total #		TOTAL #	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
School Resource Officers (SROs)	3	4	4	4	8	10	15	18
Behavior Management Specialists	4	2	0	2	1	1	5	5

*School Resource Officer (SRO)

Table 29. Number of full-and part-time SROs and Behavior Management Specialists

- Administrators also reported a total of 15 full-time and 18 part-time school resource officers (SROs). Eight of the full-time and 10 of the part-time SROs were reported in the middle/high school ALPs, 4 full-time and 4 part-time for the high school ALPs, and 3 full-time and 4 part-time for the middle school ALPs.
- A total of 5 full-time and 5 part-time behavior management specialists were reported, with 4 full-time and 2 part-time positions reported in middle school ALPs, 1 full-time and 1 part-time in a middle/high, and 2 part-time positions in the high school ALP.

Hiring of ALP Teachers

Practices in Hiring ALP Teachers	Percent
ALP administrator makes most of hiring decisions.	45
Occasionally decisions are made by higher authority.	19
ALP staff and administrator decide together.	34
ALP administrator has no input in hiring decisions.	1

Table 30. How hiring decisions are made for ALP teachers

- The most common practices for hiring ALP teachers are for the ALP administrator to make most of the decisions (45%) or for the ALP administrator and her/his staff to make the decisions together (34%).
- One percent of the ALP administrators have no authority or input at all into the decisions about hiring ALP teachers.

Number One Factor in Hiring ALP Teachers	Percent
Ability to teach to diverse learners	59
Ability to manage student behavior	21
A caring person	17
Strong content knowledge	3

Table 31. Number one factor to ALP administrator in hiring teaching staff

Acknowledging that all of the factors listed are important, ALP administrators were asked to pick their number one consideration when making a decision to hire a teacher.

- Nearly sixty percent of ALP administrators reported that a teacher’s ability to teach to diverse learners is the number one factor in making a hiring decision.
- The ability to manage student behavior and being a caring person were indicated by about equal numbers of administrators, but were a far less frequently mentioned.
- The factor of least importance by most ALP administrators is the teacher’s strong knowledge of the content area. Only three percent of administrators rated this factor as being the most important in making decisions about hiring teachers.

ALP Administrator Appraisals of Teacher Performance

Factors in ALP teacher evaluations:

- Of the 82 ALP administrators who responded to the question, seventy-seven (94%) report that they conduct the teacher evaluations of all their teaching staff.
- When asked what type of performance appraisal instrument is used to conduct teacher evaluations, 90% said they use the Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument (TPAI).
- Some administrators indicated that they use more than one method of evaluation such that responses total more than 100%. About 7% report using an LEA developed instrument, 5% report using narratives, 4% report using ALP developed instruments, and 3% report using teacher portfolios.
- About 55 percent of ALP administrators reported that they believe the TPAI is appropriate for evaluating ALP teachers, while about 45 percent disagreed.

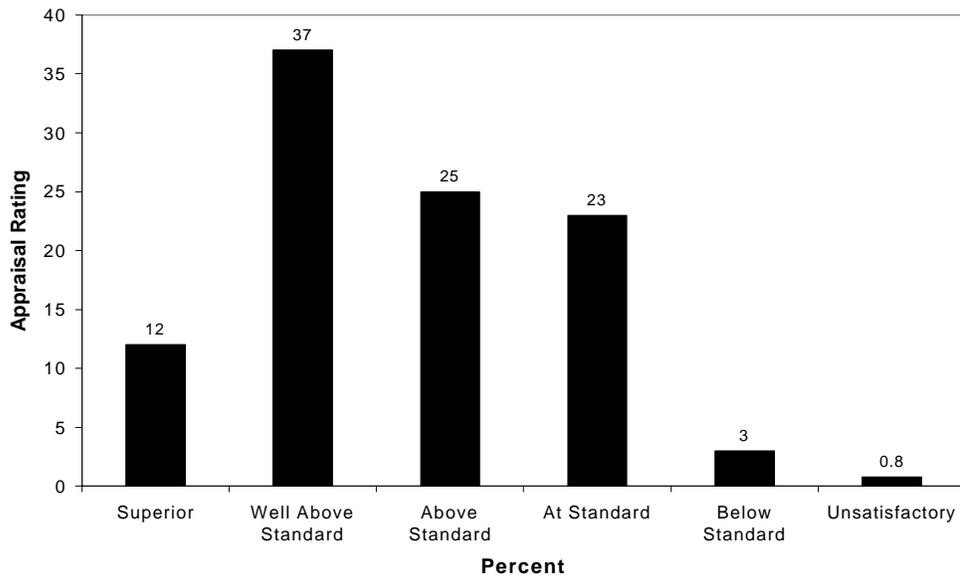


Figure 1. Full-time teacher appraisal ratings

All ALP Administrators who evaluate their staff responded to this question about teacher performance appraisal ratings. Ratings are reported for a total of 778 full-time teaching staff. Of those teachers, twenty-seven percent (206 teachers) received a rating of less than "above standard" on a performance appraisal instrument.

- Twelve percent of the teachers (91) were reported to have earned the *Superior* level of rating on the performance appraisal instrument.
- Thirty-seven percent of teachers (286) were reported to have earned the *Well Above Standard* rating on their end-of-year evaluation.
- Twenty-five percent of teachers (195) were reported to have earned the *Above Standard* rating.
- Twenty-three percent of teachers (177) were rated *At Standard* on the end-of-year evaluation.
- Three percent (23) were rated in the *Below Standard* category on the performance appraisal instrument.
- The performance of .8 percent (6) of teachers was reported to have been rated as *Unsatisfactory* on the performance appraisal instrument.

Program Admission Procedures

ALP administrators were asked to respond to provide information in a number of areas having to do with program admission procedures.

- Ninety-three percent of ALP administrators reported that their program has a well-defined referral and selection process for admitting students.
- Fifty-two percent reported that students (or parents) may apply to the program regardless of whether or not there is a referral from the student's home-base school. The other forty-eight percent reported that a referral from the home school is necessary for student enrollment.

Appropriateness of student enrollment to ALP purposes and resources	Percent
All students are appropriately placed	41
Most students are appropriately placed (>50%)	57
Some students are appropriately placed (<50%)	2
No students are appropriately placed	0

Table 32. Appropriateness of student enrollment in ALP

- Forty-one percent of ALP administrators report that all students who enroll there are appropriate to the program's purposes and resources it can provide.
- Another fifty-seven percent of ALP administrators report that most, or more than half, of their students are appropriately enrolled considering the program's mission and level of resources.

Final Approval about Student Enrollment in ALP	Percent
ALP administrator has final authority	40
A committee of ALP staff	9
A committee of regular school and ALP staff	24
A regular school committee	12
The superintendent	13

Table 33. Final approval about student enrollment in ALP

- The most common practice (40% of respondents) is for the ALP administrator to have the final authority over whether or not a student is allowed to enroll in the program.

- In about twenty-five percent of the ALPs responding, a combined committee consisting of both ALP and regular school staff make final student enrollment decisions.
- In about equal numbers of ALPs, the LEA superintendent, the regular school committee alone, or the ALP staff alone makes the final decision. These practices are less frequent, occurring in about ten percent of ALPs.

ALP Administrator Professional Development

Areas of Training/Preparation	Training Adequate	
	% Yes	% No
Academic content areas	89	11
Instructional methodologies/strategies	84	16
Behavioral/disciplinary areas	88	12
Leadership and management skills	90	10
Accountability/evaluation/program improvement	80	20

Table 34. Adequacy of training in major categories

- Most ALP administrators, ranging from 80 to 90%, report they have adequate training and preparation in the five areas listed in the table above.
- Although the difference is not large, 20 percent of ALP administrators report they are not adequately trained in the areas of accountability, evaluation, and program improvement, compared to 10 to 16 percent reporting inadequate training in the other categories.

Areas of Helpful Training	Percent
Effective systems to provide structure, consistency, and high expectations	66
Instructional methods/strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles	63
Working with suspended and expelled youth	46
Effective and creative fiscal management	44
Recruiting and maintaining effective staff in the ALP	43
Working with other community agencies to deliver comprehensive services to students	42
Strategies to involve parents	40
Working with adjudicated youth	38
Working with students with unstable home environments	38
Methods to support the continuous improvement in the performance of ALP personnel	38
Strategies to monitor continuous improvement of alternative school or program	37
Working with neglected or abused youth	34
Working with students who have substance abuse problems	31
Experiential methods to educate students	30
Working with students in BEH and Day Treatment programs	23
Working with students returning from state institutions	20
Providing effective transition and aftercare programs for students when they leave ALP	20

Table 35. ALP administrators rating topics as helpful

As on the ALP Teacher Survey, ALP administrators were asked to rate the same twenty-five areas of training in terms of topics on which they had already received helpful training.

- The top two areas of training that ALP administrators reported had been most helpful include (1) effective systems to provide structure, consistency, and high expectations, and (2) instructional methods and strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles. These topics were reported by sixty-six and sixty-three percent of ALP administrators respectively.

Areas of Needed Training	Percent
Working with students returning from state institutions	70
Working with students who have substance abuse problems	69
Providing effective transition and aftercare programs for students when they leave ALP	68
Working with students in BEH and Day Treatment programs	63
Experiential methods to educate students	62
Working with neglected or abused youth	62
Strategies to involve parents	58
Working with students with unstable home environments	58
Strategies to monitor continuous improvement of alternative school or program	57
Working with adjudicated youth	56
Working with other community agencies to deliver comprehensive services to students	54
Methods to support the continuous improvement in the performance of ALP personnel	54
Working with suspended and expelled youth	49
Effective and creative fiscal management	44
Recruiting and maintaining effective staff in the ALP	44
Effective systems to provide structure, consistency, and high expectations	39
Instructional methods/strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles	38

Table 36. ALP Administrator ratings of needed training

Survey responses of ALP administrators indicate the need for extensive training needs.

- Fifty percent or more ALP administrators indicate a need for twenty of the twenty-five areas of training listed.
- As with teachers, the areas in which administrators indicated the least amount of training tend to be the ones mentioned by most administrators as being top training needs. The three most frequently reported training needs are for (1) working with students returning from state institutions (e.g., training schools or mental health facilities), (2) working with students who are abusing substances, and (3) providing effective transitions and aftercare programs for students when they leave ALPs.

Program Effectiveness Issues

ALP administrators were asked to respond to four open-ended questions concerning program effectiveness issues. In each case, administrators were asked to give one answer, so that the total analysis would provide a good profile of the most significant concerns, factors, and suggestions statewide.

Factors that make ALPs effective. Ninety-three percent of the ALP administrators surveyed responded to this open-ended question. The most frequent response (45%) was qualified, dedicated, caring staff and staff support. The second most frequent response (27%) was small class size. The third most common response (11%) was program flexibility to meet student needs.

ALP evidence to document success. About a third of ALP administrators reported two sources of evidence as the means by which they most often document the success of students enrolled in the program. They are (1) state standardized test scores and (2) attendance, grades, and behavior. These are also the areas most frequently mentioned by teachers as sources of evidence to gauge student success.

Evidence Sources	Frequency	Percent
State/Standardized tests scores	28	34
Attendance, grades, behavior documentation	26	32
Number of successful student class completions/graduations	11	13
Number of students returning to regular program	9	11
Continuous evaluations/attendance, behavior monitoring	4	5
Non-specific (all kinds)	2	2
School improvement plan	1	1

Table 37. Evidence to document student progress

Barriers to optimal effectiveness of program. Ninety-one percent of ALP administrators surveyed responded to this open-ended question. The most frequent response (26%) was the lack of funding for teaching staff, support, and materials. Eighteen percent of administrators responded that the lack of parental support is the most significant barrier to optimal program effectiveness. Twelve percent of ALP administrators reported that poor student attitudes, lack of study habits, and poor self-esteem are the most significant barrier to success.

Most critical need for implementing quality ALPs. Ninety percent of ALP administrators surveyed responded to this question. By far the two needs considered most critical by most ALP administrators are more funding for staff support, materials, and facilities (35%) and more qualified, experienced staff (33%).

Strategies to attract and retain quality teachers in ALPs. Ninety-two percent of administrators surveyed responded to this question. Two-thirds of the respondents reported that increased salary and flexibility for ALP staff are the most important things that can be done to attract and retain quality teachers in ALPs. About a quarter of those responding reported that support from the district administration, feeder school principals and staff, and the legislature are key strategies. Another ten percent responded that hiring qualified staff helps attract other qualified staff while also helping to retain quality teachers. Good hiring decisions also reduce staff turnover.

Summary of Principal Survey Results

1. Most ALPs from whom surveys were returned are operated by a principal (70 percent). About fifty percent have at least 6 years experience as a principal. Eighty percent of the ALP principals reported that their salary is consistent with recent legislation requiring a minimum classification as Principal III.
2. As with the teaching population in ALPs, a higher proportion of ALP principals is Black and male than the proportion among principals across the state.
3. Ninety-five percent of ALP administrators are over forty years of age, and nearly seventy percent have ten or more years of administrative experience.
4. Over half of the ALP administrators report directly to the LEA Superintendent and another twenty percent report to an associate or assistant superintendent. All respondents reported having authority to either suspend only or suspend and expel students, regardless of whether they are classified as principals or other types of positions.
5. About ninety-five percent of ALP administrators report that they evaluate all their teaching staff. All of these ALP Administrators responded to this question about teacher performance appraisal ratings. Ratings are reported for a total of 778 full-time teaching staff. Of those teachers, twenty-seven percent (206 teachers) received a rating of less than "above standard" on a performance appraisal instrument. About fifty percent of teachers received a rating of "superior" or "well above standard".
6. Ninety-nine percent of ALP administrators report they either make most of the hiring decisions or usually have some involvement in the process. Sixty percent of administrators report that their number one consideration in hiring a teacher is that person's ability to teach to diverse learners. Equal numbers, about 20 percent, report that either the ability to manage student behavior or the caring nature of the person is the key-determining factor. Only three percent of administrators report that strong content knowledge is the number one factor in their decision to hire a teacher.
7. When asked the most important thing that can be done to attract and retain quality teaching staff in ALPs, the response of two-thirds of administrators was increased salary and flexibility for staff. About one-fourth responded that support from the district administration, feeder school principals and staff, and the legislature are key.
8. While about more than eighty percent of ALP administrators report either developing or participating in the development of the ALP budget, fewer are knowledgeable about (57 percent) or involved in (36 percent) district decisions about expenditures from the state allotment to districts from the At-Risk Student Services fund.

9. Of the 82 ALPs that reported data on the number of full-time and part-time student support services staff, there was a total of only 78 full-time personnel for all five areas (counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, and media specialists). An additional 56 part-time student support staff were reported. However, these low numbers are in stark contrast to the portrait of needs of the student population as indicated by the top areas for needed training expressed by both ALP administrators and teachers. There are increasing concerns about finding effective educational and intervention programs such as those for students who have been abused and neglected, are returning from training school and mental health facilities, are from unstable home environments, and have substance abuse problems.

